

## **Appendix B - National Park Service Management Policies**

The following policy statements pertaining to transportation and visitor facilities are from the *NPS Management Policies 2001*. Consistent with applicable laws and regulations, adherence to policy is mandatory unless specifically waived or modified by the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary, or the Director.

### **Transportation Systems**

The location, type, and design of transportation systems and their components (e.g., roads, bridges, trails, and parking areas), and the use of alternative transportation systems, all strongly influence the quality of the visitor experience. These systems also affect, to a great degree, how and where park resources will be impacted. For these reasons, management decisions regarding transportation facilities require a full, interdisciplinary consideration of alternatives, and a full understanding of their consequences. Traditional practices of building wider roads and larger parking areas to accommodate more motor vehicles are not necessarily the answer. The Service must find better transportation solutions, which will preserve the natural and cultural resources in its care while providing a high-quality visitor experience.

Early NPS participation in transportation studies and planning processes is crucial to the long term strategy of working closely with other federal agencies; tribal, state and local governments; regional planning bodies; citizen groups; and others to enhance partnering and funding opportunities. The Service will participate in all transportation planning forums that may result in links to parks or impacts to park resources. Working with federal, tribal, state, and local agencies on transportation issues, the Service will seek reasonable access to parks, and connections to external transportation systems. The Service will also advocate corridor crossings for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and other accommodations to promote biodiversity, and to avoid or mitigate (1) harm to individual animals, (2) the fragmentation of plant and animal habitats, and (3) the disruption of natural systems.

Depending on a park's size, location, resources, and level of use, the NPS will, where appropriate, emphasize and encourage alternative transportation systems, which may include a mix of buses, trains, ferries, trams, and – preferably – non-motorized modes of access to, and moving within, parks. In general, the preferred modes of transportation will be those that contribute to maximum visitor enjoyment of, and minimum adverse impacts to, park resources and values.

Before a decision is made to design, construct, expand, or upgrade access to or within a park, non-construction alternatives – such as distributing visitors to alternative locations – must be fully explored. If non-construction alternatives will not achieve satisfactory results, then a development solution may be pursued if the project:

- Is appropriate and necessary to meet park management needs or to provide for visitor use and enjoyment;
- Is designed with extreme care and sensitivity to the landscape through which it passes;
- Will not cause unacceptable adverse impacts to natural and cultural resources, and will minimize or mitigate those that cannot be avoided;

- Will not cause use in the areas it serves to exceed the areas' visitor carrying capacity;
- Will incorporate the principles of energy conservation and sustainability;
- Will incorporate universal design principles to provide accessibility for people with disabilities;
- Will take maximum advantage of interpretive opportunities and scenic values;
- Will not violate federal, state, or local air pollution control plans or regulations; and
- Is based on a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach that is fully consistent with the park's general management plan.

If a decision is made to construct, expand, or reconstruct a park transportation system, the Service will address the need for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife corridor crossings and other accommodations to avoid or mitigate harm to individual animals, the fragmentation of plant and animal habitats, and the disruption of natural systems. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2*)

### **Park Roads**

Park roads will be well constructed, sensitive to natural and cultural resources, reflect the highest principles of park design, and enhance the visitor experience. Park roads are generally not intended to provide fast and convenient transportation; rather, they are intended to enhance the quality of a visit, while providing for safe and efficient travel, with minimal or no impacts on natural and cultural resources.

For most parks, a road system is already in place. When plans for meeting the transportation needs of these parks are updated, a determination must be made as to whether the road system should be maintained as is, reduced, expanded, re-oriented, eliminated, or supplemented by other means of travel. When roads are chronically at or near capacity, the use of alternative destination points or transportation systems, or limitations on use, will be considered as alternatives to road expansion.

Park road designs are subject to NPS Park Road Standards, which are adaptable to each park's unique character and resource limitations. Although some existing roads do not meet current engineering standards, they may be important cultural resources whose values must be preserved. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2.1.1*)

### **Alternative Transportation Systems**

The Service will work cooperatively with other federal agencies; tribal, state and local governments; regional planning bodies; concessioners; citizen groups, and others to design and promote alternative transportation systems for park access and circulation. In-park transportation systems should be linked to public transportation whenever feasible, through cooperation with public transportation agencies and gateway communities.

A decision to provide visitor transportation systems will be based on a finding that the system:

- Is a cost-effective alternative to the construction, operation, and maintenance of additional roads, parking areas, and support facilities;
- Will reduce traffic congestions, noise, air pollution, and adverse effects on park resources and values;

- Will enhance the visitor experience by offering new or improved interpretive or recreational opportunities; by simplifying travel within the park; or by making it easier or safer to see park features; and
- Will conserve energy and utilize alternative fueled vehicles whenever practicable.

All alternative transportation systems may be considered conceptually. However, any alternative transportation system that would require a significant investment in the construction of tracks, suspended cables, or advanced technologies will not go beyond conceptual status without approval from the director. A compelling advantage must be shown before any mode of transportation other than rubber-tired vehicles operating on existing roads, or standard displacement boats, will be authorized. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2.2*)

### **Trails and Walks**

Trails and walks provide the only means of access into many areas within parks. These facilities will be planned and developed as integral parts of each park's transportation system, and incorporate principles of universal design. Trails and walks will serve as management tools to help control the distribution and intensity of use. All trails and walks will be carefully situated, designed, and managed to

- Reduce conflicts with automobiles and incompatible uses;
- Allow for a satisfying park experience;
- Allow accessibility by the greatest number of people; and
- Protect park resources.

Heavily used trails and walks in developed areas may be surfaced as necessary for visitor safety, accessibility for persons with impaired mobility, resource protection, or erosion control. Surface materials should be carefully selected, taking into account factors such as the purpose and location of a trail or walk, and the potential for erosion and other environmental impacts. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2.3*)

### **Cooperative Trail Planning**

The Park Service will cooperate with other land managers, non-profit organizations, and user groups to facilitate local and regional trail access to parks. When parks abut other public lands, the Service will participate in inter-agency, multi-jurisdictional trail planning. When an effective trail system exists, and when otherwise permitted, hostels or similar low-cost overnight facilities may be provided, if they are consistent with the park's general management plan, and harmonize with the natural and/or cultural resources. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2.3.1*)

### **Hiking Trails**

Trail design will vary to accommodate a wide range of users, and will be appropriate to user patterns and site conditions. Wetlands will generally be avoided and, where possible, they will be spanned by a boardwalk or other means, using sustainable materials that will not disturb hydrologic or ecological processes. Backcountry trails will offer visitors a primitive outdoor experience, and will be unsurfaced and modest in character, except where a more durable surface is needed. The use of non-native materials is generally not permitted on backcountry trails. (*NPS Management Policies 9.2.3.2*)

### **Equestrian Trails**

Equestrian trails and related support facilities, such as feed boxes and hitch rails, may be provided when they are consistent with park objectives, and when site conditions are suitable. Horse camps should be designed with user interest in mind, and consistent with NPS policy. Photovoltaic systems should be evaluated to power any necessary water systems, and ramps for mounting the animals must be provided for persons with disabilities. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.3.3)

### **Bicycle Trails**

Bicycle routes may be considered as an alternative to motor vehicle access. Bicycle travelways may be integrated with park roads when determined to be safe and feasible. Bicycle trails may be paved or stabilized for the protection of resources, and for the safety and convenience of travelers. The designation of bicycle routes, other than on park roads and in parking areas, requires a written determination that such use is consistent with the protection of a park's natural, cultural, scenic, and esthetic values, safety considerations, and management objectives, and will not disturb wildlife or other park resources. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.3.4)

### **Interpretive Trails**

Interpretive trails and walks, both guided and self-guiding, may be used for purposes of visitor appreciating and understanding of park values. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.3.6)

### **Trailheads**

Trailheads, and trail access points from which trail use can begin, will be carefully tied into other elements of the park development and circulation system to facilitate safe and enjoyable trail use, and efficient management. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.3.8)

### **Trail Bridges**

Trail bridges may be used for crossing swift waters, areas prone to flash-flooding, and other places presenting potential safety hazards. Less obtrusive alternatives to bridges, such as culverts, fords, and trail relocation, will be considered before a decision is made to build a bridge. A bridge may be the preferred alternative when necessary to prevent stream bank erosion, or to protect wetlands or fisheries. If a bridge is determined to be appropriate, it will be kept to the minimum size needed to serve trail users, and be designed to harmonize with the surrounding natural scene and be as unobtrusive as possible. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.3.9)

### **Traffic Signs and Markings**

Signs will be limited to the minimum necessary to meet information, warning, and regulatory needs; and to avoid confusion and visual intrusion. Signs should be planned to provide a pleasing, uniform appearance. Traffic signs and pavement markings on park roads will be consistent with the standards contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, as supplemented by the National Park Service Sign Manual. All roadside signs and markings will conform to good traffic engineering practices. Park signs – especially those that display the NPS arrowhead symbol – are an important part of the total identity system for the NPS, and must

conform to the standards contained in Director's Order #52C: Park Signage. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.4)

### **Parking Areas**

Parking areas and overlooks will be located so as not to unacceptably intrude, by sight, sound, or other impact, on park resources or values. When parking areas are deemed necessary, they will be limited to the smallest size appropriate, and be designed to harmoniously accommodate motor vehicles and other appropriate users. When large parking areas are needed, appropriate plantings and other design elements will be used to reduce negative visual and environmental impacts. When overflow parking is provided to meet peak visitation, it should be in areas that have been stabilized, or are otherwise capable of withstanding the temporary impacts of parking without harming park resources. Permanent parking areas will not normally be sized for the peak use day, but rather for the use anticipated on the average weekend day during the peak season of use. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.2.5)

### **Informational and Interpretive Facilities**

Informational and interpretive facilities will be provided to assist park visitors in appreciation and enjoying the park and understanding its significance, provided that the facilities can be developed without impairing the park's natural or cultural resources. The Harpers Ferry Center will be consulted on planning, design, and quality control for major interpretive facilities. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.1)

### **Entrance Stations**

Entrance and fee collection stations will be harmonious with the park environment, and should reflect the architectural character of the park. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.1.2)

### **Visitor Centers**

When necessary to provide visitor information and interpretive services, visitor centers may be constructed at locations identified in approved plans. To minimize visual intrusions and impacts to major park features, visitor centers will generally not be located near such features. Where an in-park location would create unacceptable environmental impacts, authorization should be obtained to place a visitor center outside the park. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.1.3)

Visitor centers are not substitutes for personal or self-guiding on-site interpretation. They will be constructed only when it has been determined that indoor media are the most effective means of communicating major elements of the park story, and that a central public-contact point is needed.

As appropriate, a visitor center may include information services, sales of educational materials and theme-related items, audiovisual programs, museums, museum collections storage, exhibits, and other staffed or self-help programs and spaces necessary for a high-quality visitor experience. Additionally, the need for restrooms, drinking fountains, and other basic visitor requirements will be considered during the planning and design stage.

**Wayside Exhibits**

Wayside exhibits may be provided along roads and heavily used walks and trails to interpret resources on site. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.1.5)

**Viewing Devices**

Viewing devices, such as pedestal binoculars or telescopes, may be provided at appropriate locations when the superintendent determines that such devices are desirable for the meaningful interpretation or understanding of park resources. Such devices may be provided by the Service, or by others under a concession contract or commercial use authorization. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.1.6)

**Overnight Accommodations and Food Services**

Overnight facilities and food services will be restricted to the kinds and levels necessary and appropriate to achieve each park's purposes. In many cases, overnight accommodations and food services are not needed within a park. In general, they should be provided only when the private sector or other public agencies cannot adequately provide them in the park vicinity. However, in-park facilities or services may be justified when the distance and travel time to accommodations and services outside the park are too great to permit reasonable use, or when leaving the park to obtain incidental services would substantially detract from the quality of the visitor experience. Certain activities, such as backcountry use, may require overnight stays. Types of overnight accommodations may vary from unimproved backcountry campsites to motel- or hotel-type lodging, as appropriate. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.2)

**Campgrounds**

When campgrounds are determined to be necessary, their design will accommodate the differences between recreation-vehicle camping and tent camping, and will consider cultural landscapes, terrain, soils, vegetation, wildlife, climate, special needs of users, visual and auditory privacy, and other relevant factors.

The Park Service generally will not provide a full range of amenities and utility hookups. Portable generators may be allowed, but they may also be limited to designated areas and times. To eliminate the need for generators, electric utilities may be provided on a limited basis. Shower facilities may be provided where feasible. Modest-sized play areas for small children are permissible, as are informal areas for field sports associated with organized group camps. Wood fires in fire rings are generally permissible; however, whenever it is necessary to restrict such fires at individual campsites because of fire danger, air pollution, or other hazards, alternatives may be provided or allowed, such as facilities for the use of charcoal or other fuels, or central cook sheds. When a need exists, sanitary dump stations will be provided in or near campgrounds that accommodate recreation vehicles.

When necessary for basic safety requirements, pathways and the exteriors of buildings and structures may be lighted. Such lighting will be energy efficient and shielded as much as possible to preserve the natural dark.

Campgrounds intended to accommodate large recreation vehicles or buses will be located only where existing roads can safely accommodate such vehicles and the resulting increased traffic load.

Campgrounds will not exceed 250 sites unless a larger number of sites has been approved by the Director.

When desirable for purposes of management, tent camping may be accommodated in separate campgrounds, or in separately designated areas within campgrounds. Provisions may also be made for accommodating organized groups in separate campgrounds, or in separately designated areas.

Boaters' campgrounds may be provided in parks with waters used for recreational boating. The need for campgrounds – and their sizes, locations, and numbers – will be determined by (1) the types of water body (e.g. river, lake, reservoir, saltwater); (2) the availability and resiliency of potential campsites; (3) the feasibility of providing and maintaining docking, beaching, mooring, camping, and sanitary facilities; and (4) the potential impacts on park natural and cultural resources. (*NPS Management Policies* 9.3.2.1)

### **Backcountry Campsites (Dispersed Campsites)**

Backcountry and wilderness campsites may be permitted, but only within the acceptable limits of use determined by the park's wilderness management plan, resource management plan, or other pertinent planning document. (*NPS Management Policies* 9.3.2.2)

### **Hostels and Shelters**

Hostels are low-cost, supervised accommodations that encourage and facilitate the energy-efficient, non-motorized enjoyment of parks and their surrounding regions by individuals and families. Such facilities, along with hostel-like accommodations such as huts and shelters, will be considered in the planning process if overnight use is determined to be an appropriate use of the park, particularly as a means of encouraging and facilitating the use of trails and backcountry areas. The Service will cooperate with other agencies, non-profit organizations, park concessioners, and others to plan and develop hostels, where appropriate. If a decision is reached to develop a hostel accommodation, it will be managed by others under the provisions of concession policies and procedures.

Hostels will, at a minimum, contain sheltered overnight accommodations and sanitary facilities, and they will usually contain cooking, eating, and recreation spaces. Hostels may be used for other park programs, such as environmental education or interpretation. Although non-motorized access to hostels is emphasized, motorized transportation may also be available. (*NPS Management Policies* 9.3.2.3)

### **Comfort Stations (Restroom Facilities)**

Comfort facilities will have waste disposal systems that meet Public Health Service standards. Levels of use will determine the size and nature of the utility systems provided. Low-water-use or waterless (composting) toilets will be considered in locations where there are water-supply and waste-water-disposal problems. Chemical toilets in portable enclosures may be used for

temporary purposes when necessary. Pit privies, vault toilets, composting toilets, or other alternatives that meet public health standards may suffice in little-used areas in which utility services are not readily available. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.3)

#### **Other Visitor Facilities**

Other visitor facilities may be provided when necessary for visitor enjoyment of the area, and when consistent with the protection of park values. Visitor facilities determined to be detrimental to park resources or values will not be permitted. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.4)

#### **Picnic and Other Day Use Areas**

Picnic areas and other day use areas to be used for specific purposes (such as play areas) may be provided on a limited basis as appropriate to meet existing visitor needs. (NPS *Management Policies* 9.3.4.1)